

**MINUTES OF THE  
CHILD WELFARE LEGISLATIVE OVERSIGHT PANEL**

October 12, 1999 -- 1:00 p.m. -- Room 416 State Capitol

**Members Present:**

Rep. Nora B. Stephens, House Chair  
Sen. Gene Davis  
Rep. Trisha Beck  
Rep. Matt Throckmorton

**Members Excused:**

Sen. Lyle W. Hillyard, Senate Chair

**Staff Present:**

Mr. Mark D. Andrews,  
Research Analyst  
Mr. R. Chet Loftis  
Associate General Counsel  
Ms. Tracey Fredman  
Legislative Secretary

Note: A list of others present and a copy of materials distributed in the meeting are on file in the Office of Legislative Research and General Counsel.

**1. Call to Order and Approval of September 14, 1999 Minutes** — Chair Stephens called the meeting to order at 1:05 p.m.

**MOTION:** Rep. Throckmorton moved that the minutes of the September 14, 1999 meeting be approved. The motion passed unanimously.

**2. Report by the Board of Child and Family Services on Intake** — Mr. Scott Clark, Chair, Board of Child and Family Services, made introductory comments. Ms. Becky Oakley, member of the Board of Child and Family Services and chair of a work committee formed by the board, distributed *Report of Western Region's CPS Multiple-Response* and presented the recommendations of the committee found in the report. Judge Regnal Garff, also a member of the board and committee, assisted her. The committee recommends establishing a pilot program that would:

- Utilize a statewide hotline that would screen referrals as accepted/unaccepted and forward them to DCFS regions for response classification
- Allow regions to classify responses as accepted for investigation or accepted for family assessment
- Base response classifications on predetermined guidelines recommended by the committee
- Require a response to be changed from the original classification if conditions warrant
- Base a family assessment on guidelines outlined by the committee
- Require strong, consistent, mandatory training for all intake workers
- Require modifications to the SAFE management information system to reflect the provisions of the program

- Include making appropriate changes to DCFS policies as recommended by the committee
- Include evaluation by an independent evaluator
- Include appropriate changes to statute

The panel discussed the recommendations, including the proposed response to newborns that test positive for drugs. Current response varies by hospital. Chair Stephens commented that this may be an issue the panel should look into further.

Mr. Clark raised the issue of data privacy given the vast amount of confidential information from a family assessment that could be included in SAFE.

**MOTION:** Sen. Davis moved that the panel accept the *Report of Western Region's CPS Multiple-Response* and encourage DCFS to implement the recommendations of the report as far as possible, that DCFS report back to the committee within 60 days, and that staff draft statutory language to implement the recommendations. The motion passed unanimously.

**3. Follow-up Recommended Changes to Adoption Statute** — Mr. Andrews distributed draft legislation "Notice to Potential Adoptive Parents" (draft #003). The bill shifts the burden of advising DCFS of parents who are interested in adopting children in state custody from private adoption agencies to potential adoptive parents and makes related changes. Rep. Stephens asked the committee to approve the concept of the draft, with the understanding that changes to the bill will be brought back next month for the committee's further consideration.

**4. Legislative Audit of Foster Care and Child Protective Service Cases — Proposed Legislation to Implement Recommendations** — Rep. Stephens distributed draft legislation "Legislative Audits of Child Welfare System" (draft #008), which amends both the Bureau of Services Review process and the Legislative Audit process. She outlined specific changes contained within the draft.

The committee discussed the feasibility of combining the two reports into one and also discussed the completion dates for the reports.

**MOTION:** Sen. Davis moved that the bill be accepted. The motion passed unanimously.

**5. Bureau of Services Review Report, 1999** — Mr. Craig Monson, Department of Human Services, introduced Mr. Brad McGarry, Department of Human Services, and distributed *Bureau of Services Review Report 1999*. Mr. Monson explained that DCFS has an extensive performance, evaluation, and improvement system. He explained the system as described in the

report. Mr. McGarry briefly discussed the findings of the report in the areas of child protective services, home-based services, and general foster care.

In response to the question of why half of the measures shown in the report are lower for 1999 than 1997, Mr. Monson and Mr. Ken Patterson, Director, DCFS, indicated that some questions were asked differently, some changes may be due to small samples, and some items are not being recorded adequately for review by an independent reviewer due to a 30% annual employee turnover rate.

In response the panel's query about how to help reduce turnover, Mr. Patterson highlighted the starting salary of caseworkers which he said is lower than the starting salary of prison guards and teachers.

**6. Update on The Performance Milestone Plan** — Ms. Caren Frost, Division of Child and Family Services, said that Judge Campbell will hold a status conference to discuss the progress of the Performance Milestone Plan Friday, October 15. She also said that the third bi-monthly report on the status of items in the Performance Milestone Plan will be completed on Friday. She said she would send copies of the report to the panel and a copy of the documentation to staff. Ms. Frost also mentioned the goal of DCFS to gain accreditation and invited the involvement of the panel in the process.

**7. Review of Child Welfare Measures** — not discussed.

**8. Interim Planning** — The next meeting will be Monday, November 22, 1999 at 1:00 p.m.

**9. Adjourn** — The meeting was adjourned at 3:40 p.m.

